



# Philosophy Syllabus

Introduction to Philosophy, PHIL 1301

Instructor: Zachary Akin

Fall 2018, Web-Enhanced (3 Credit Hours)

Learning Web Page:  
<https://learning.hccs.edu/faculty/zachary.akin>

HCC Alief Campus, RM A409  
TR 7:00 – 8:20 pm

Email: [zachary.akin@hccs.edu](mailto:zachary.akin@hccs.edu)

## Course Description:

This course is a study of the major issues in philosophy and/or the work of major philosophical figures in philosophy. Topics in philosophy may include theories of reality, theories of knowledge, theories of value, and their practical applications (Texas ACGM). It provides a theoretically diverse introduction to the study of ideas, including arguments and investigations about abstract and real phenomena, particularly in the areas of knowledge, ethics, and religion (HCC Course Catalogue). This course stresses the HCC Core Objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility.

## PREREQUISITE(S):

- ENGL 1301 or higher

## HCC CORE CURRICULUM:

This course satisfies the **Philosophy, Language, and Culture** component area or the **Component Area Option** in the HCC Core Curriculum. If you are not sure that you need this course to graduate, please consult with your advisor.

## Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of arguments, problems, and terminology in philosophy.
2. Analyze and critique philosophical texts in ways that demonstrate an awareness of argument structure and the evaluation of philosophical claims.
3. Present logically persuasive arguments orally and in writing that are relevant to philosophical issues covered in course material.
4. Evaluate personal and social responsibilities of living in a diverse world in terms of the philosophical issues raised in

course material.

### **CLASS COMPORIMENT:**

**This course introduces students to the discipline of philosophy, understood essentially as the loving pursuit of wisdom.**

**We will undertake this pursuit of wisdom together: reading texts by some of the greatest thinkers in the Western tradition, discovering what big questions they found important, and contemplating their answers. Philosophers are concerned with universal and timeless questions such as: What is really true? How do we know what we know? What does it mean to be a good and virtuous human being? How do we become good? Why should we be good at all? What is happiness, and how do we find it? Where did we come from, and where are we going? Is there a God, and if so, how do we come to know this God?**

**We will focus on asking what it means to love wisdom and to live a life in pursuit of it. We also hope that you will learn what it means to "do philosophy," why it is important, and how to approach these big questions with a humble, honest, and careful mind and heart.**

**I want this course to be a delightful and enriching experience for you. I am convinced that philosophy is an essential part of human life. We are all thinkers, and in this sense, we are also all philosophers. But the question is whether we do it well or poorly. Doing philosophy well is not easy, and this course will indeed be a challenge. But if you take this challenge seriously and engage these thinkers and questions sincerely, this can be one of the most exciting courses of your college experience.**

**An important aspect of philosophic practice is the practice of dialogue, that is, the exchange of ideas between persons for the purpose of pursuing a common understanding.**

**To allow for the uninterrupted flow of ideas within our classroom, I will ask that students turn off all portable devices and refrain from texting and other such interactions. Laptops are allowed for the taking of notes only.**

### **A NOTE ON THE READINGS:**

**The readings for this course are difficult and require special effort. The texts will be taken as the basis for presenting, analyzing, and critically evaluating different philosophical problems. As a member of the class you have the obligation to be well prepared for and participate in every meeting. To be well prepared for this course you need to do more than just look over the assigned materials. Often you will have to read the text 2 or 3 times. You also need intelligent, critical reading of the texts; that is, you should:**

- a. Identify (and mark) the main thesis in the reading. If the thesis is not stated explicitly in the texts you must be prepared to defend your interpretation.**

- b. Identify the evidence or support given in favor of the thesis.**
- c. For every reference you make to the material, point to the exact place in the text.**
- d. Give a critical analysis of the evidence or support. Focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the author's position (e.g., Is the author consistent? Are there any unwarranted assumptions?)**
- e. Evaluate whether the consequences that follow from the argument are plausible.**
- f. Are there any other interesting observations or questions that might be worth discussing?**
- g. Are there any interesting connections to other readings or areas of the program? Or to ideas of your own?**

**You will have the opportunity to evaluate this course.**

**Required Texts (In the order we will be reading them):**

- 1. *Five Dialogues*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Plato. ISBN 978-0-87220-633-5**
- 2. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Rene Descartes. ISBN 1026-17-735-102029**
- 3. *Inquiry and Essays*. Thomas Reid. ISBN 0-915145-85-5**
- 4. *Pensees*. Blaise Pascal. ISBN 0140446451**
- 5. *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. David Hume. ISBN 978-0-87220-402-7**
- 6. *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Friedrich Nietzsche. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. ISBN 978-1-316-60259-1**

**Grading Components and Weights [Selected by Instructor]:**

**Pop Reading Quizzes – 20%**

**Tests – 30% - Two tests, the first worth 10% and the second worth 20%**

**Final Exam – 25% - A comprehensive final covering all material in the course**

**Philosophical Essay – 25% - 4-5 page paper on a philosophical topic**

**Grading Policy:**

The term grade legend follows:

A = 90% to 100%  
B = 80% to 89.9%  
C = 70% to 79.9%  
D = 60% to 69.9%  
F = 0% to 59.9%  
FX (Failure due to non-attendance)  
IP (In Progress)  
W (Withdrawn)  
I (Incomplete)  
AUD (Audit)

IP (In Progress) is given only in certain developmental courses. The student must re-enroll to receive credit. COM (Completed) is given in non-credit and continuing education courses. FINAL GRADE OF FX: Students who stop attending class and do not withdraw themselves prior to the withdrawal deadline may either be dropped by their professor for excessive absences or be assigned the final grade of "FX" at the end of the semester. Students who stop attending classes will receive a grade of "FX", compared to an earned grade of "F" which is due to poor performance. Logging into a DE course without active participation is seen as non-attending. Please note that HCC will not disperse financial aid funding for students who have never attended class.

Students who receive financial aid but fail to attend class will be reported to the Department of Education and may have to pay back their aid. A grade of "FX" is treated exactly the same as a grade of "F" in terms of GPA, probation, suspension, and satisfactory academic progress. To compute grade point average (GPA), divide the total grade points by the total number of semester hours attempted. The grades "IP," "COM" and "I" do not affect GPA.

*\*Philosophy Tutoring is available at <http://hccs.askonline.net/> Please use it if you need it !!*

### **Academic Honesty:**

Learning and teaching take place best in an atmosphere of intellectual freedom and openness. All members of the academic community are responsible for supporting freedom and openness through rigorous personal standards of honesty and fairness. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty undermine the very purpose of the university and diminish the value of an education. Specific sanctions for academic dishonesty are outlined in the student handbook.

### **Make-up Policy:**

Attendance in this class is extremely important. Since we are dealing with complex and difficult material, it is vitally important that you are in class and ready to participate daily. If you are unable to attend the class, it is your obligation to arrange with a classmate the acquisition of the day's material. Do not contact me to ask if you have missed "anything important". You are expected to come to class prepared and ready to participate in class discussion.

Exams will commence at the start of class. I expect everyone to arrive on time, prepared with the needed materials. I will lock the classroom door exactly ten minutes after the exam has

begun. If you arrive after that, you will not be allowed to take the exam. I will allow make up exams for the following reasons ONLY:

Illness

Death of a loved one

Military exercises – etc.

Legal proceedings

If your absence is due to one of these reasons you must let me know WITHIN 24 HOURS OF THE MISSED EXAM. After you provide proper documentation we will schedule your make up exam. If you fail to notify me within 24 hours, or your absence is not due to the above exceptions then YOU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO MAKE UP THE EXAM.

### **Attendance and Withdrawal Policy:**

HCC Students are expected to attend class regularly. A daily record of absences will be maintained throughout the semester. NOTE: It is the responsibility of the student to drop, or officially withdraw from this course. Your instructor will withdraw a student if and only if provided a written request from that student. Additionally, system-wide rules affect withdrawals:

- (1) Students who repeat a course for a third, or more times, may face a significant tuition/fee increase at HCC and other Texas public colleges and universities.
- (2) The Texas Legislature passed a law limiting new students (those starting college in Fall 2007) to no more than six total course withdrawals throughout their academic career in obtaining a baccalaureate degree. There may be future penalties imposed.
- (3) No student may withdraw from a course following the set "last date to withdraw", which for XXXXX 20XX on XXXXXXXX, XXXXXXXX XX at X:XX XX. After that date and time, a student can only be given a grade earned, or an "I" for incomplete. Incompletes must be made up by the end of the following long semester, after which they will automatically change to a grade of "F". Students receiving an "I" for a course are ineligible for graduation until the "I" has been removed from a student's transcript.

### **Students with Disabilities:**

The HCC Accessibility website is located at the following url:

<http://www.hccs.edu/district/departments/accessibility/>. You will find information about the types of assistance offered to students with special instructional needs on that web page. You will also find contact information for your college's ADA compliance and accessibility office.

For questions, please contact Donna Price at 713.718.5165 or the Disability Counselor at Northwest College, Mahnaz Kolaini at 713.718.5422.

### **EGLS3 – Evaluation for Greater Learning Student Survey System:**

At Houston Community College, professors believe that thoughtful student feedback is necessary to improve teaching and learning. During a designated time near the end of the term, you will be asked to answer a short online survey of research-based questions related to

instruction. The anonymous results of the survey will be made available to your professors and department chairs for continual improvement of instruction. Look for the survey as part of the Houston Community College Student System online near the end of the term.

**Title IX Discrimination:** Houston Community College is committed to cultivating an environment free from inappropriate conduct of a sexual or gender-based nature including sex discrimination, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and sexual violence. Sex discrimination includes all forms of sexual and gender-based misconduct and violates an individual's fundamental rights and personal dignity. Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex including pregnancy and parental status-in educational programs and activities. If you require an accommodation due to pregnancy please contact an Abilities Services Counselor. The Director of EEO/Compliance is designated as the Title IX and Section 504 Coordinator. All inquiries concerning HCC policies, compliance with applicable laws, statutes, and regulations (such as Title VI, Title IX, and Section 504), and complaints may be directed to:

David Cross - Director EEO/Compliance - Office of Institutional Equity & Diversity

3100 Main - Houston, TX 77266-7517 or Institutional.Equity@hccs.edu (713) 718-8271

**Open/Campus Carry of Handguns:** At HCC the safety of our students, staff, and faculty is our first priority. As of August 1, 2017, Houston Community College is subject to the Campus Carry Law (SB11 2015). For more information, visit the HCC Campus Carry web page at <http://www.hccs.edu/district/departments/police/campus-carry/>.

### **TOPICAL OUTLINE:**

Week of January 14 – Intro to the Class & What is Philosophy?, Plato

Week of January 21 – No Class January 21<sup>st</sup> for MLK Jr. Day, Plato Cont.

Week of January 28 – Plato Cont.

Week of February 4 – Test 1, Descartes

Week of February 11 – Descartes Cont.

Week of February 18 – No Class February 18th for Presidents' Day, Descartes Cont.

Week of February 25 – Reid

Week of March 4 – Reid Cont.

SPRING BREAK MARCH 11-15

Week of March 18 – Reid, Pascal

Week of March 25 – Pascal Cont.

Week of April 1 – Pascal, Test 2

Week of April 8 – Hume

Week of April 15 – Hume Cont.

Week of April 22 – Nietzsche

Week of April 29 – Nietzsche Cont.

Final Exam – May 9, 7:30 – 9:30pm